1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

with the customs of the Seri), endured for many years and ending at last in unpitied death.

Collectively the cases seem to define a germ, rather than a mature custom, of adoption. In the first case a benefactor (by means regarded as magical) was formally inducted into the reigning family; in the second case the conquering hero (through what were again regarded as magical means) was less formally recognized and venerated, even worshiped, as an all-powerful shaman; while in the third case a representative of the doughtiest alien tribe was enslaved, probably with motives akin to those expressed in the carrying of chargeless guns, the making of imitation machetes, and other fetishistic devices. Except in the first instance there is no indication of consistent custom; but since the entire history of the tribe clearly contradicts regulated adoption of aliens (and indeed affords no other example), it must be inferred that any such custom is intratribal rather than intertribal.

MARRIAGE

The most striking and significant social facts discovered among the Seri relate to marriage customs.

As noted repeatedly elsewhere, the tribal population is preponderantly feminine, so that polygyny naturally prevails; the number of wives reaches three or possibly four, averaging about two, though the younger warriors commonly have but one, and there are always a number of spouseless (widowed) dames but no single men of marriageable age. So far as could be ascertained, no special formalities attend the taking of supernumerary wives, who are usually widowed sisters of the first spouse; it seems to be practically a family affair, governed by considerations of convenience rather than established regulations—an irregularity combining with other facts to suggest that polygyny is incidental, and perhaps of comparatively recent origin.

The primary mating of the Seri is attended by observances so elaborate as to show that marriage is one of the profoundest sacraments of the tribe, penetrating the innermost recesses of tribal thought, and interwoven with the essential fibers of tribal existence. Few if any other peoples devote such anxious care to their mating as do the Seri;[1] and among no other known tribe or folk is the moral aspect of conjugal union so rigorously guarded by collective action and individual devotion.

The initial movement toward formal marriage seems to be somewhat indefinite (or perhaps, rather, spontaneous); according to Mashém it may be made either by the prospective groom or else by his father, though not directly by the maiden or her kinswomen. In any event the prerequisites for the union are provisionally determined in the suitor's family; these relate to the suitability of age, the propriety of

[1] Perhaps the closest parallel in this respect is that found in the elaborate marriage regulations prevailing among the Australian aborigines, as described by Spencer and Gillen, Walter E. Roth, and other modern observers.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

584 [582] the clan relation, etc; for no stripling may seriously contemplate matrimony until he has entered manhood (apparently corresponding with the warrior class), nor can he mate in his own totem, though all other clans of the tribe are apparently open to him; while the maiden must have passed (apparently by a considerable time) her puberty feast. In any event, too, the proposal is formally conveyed by the elderwoman of the suitor's family to the maiden's clanmother, when it is duly pondered, first by this dame and her daughter matrons; and later (if the proposal is entertained) it is deliberated and discussed at length by the matrons of the two clans involved, who commonly hold repeated councils for the purpose. At an undetermined stage and to an undetermined degree the maiden herself is consulted; certainly she holds the power of veto, ostensible if not actual. Pending the deliberations the maiden receives special consideration and enjoys various dignities; if circumstances favor, her kinswomen erect a jacal for her; and even if circumstances are adverse, she is outfitted with a pelican robe of six or eight pelts and other matronly requisites. When all parties concerned are eventually satisfied a probationary marriage is arranged, and the groom leaves his clan and attaches himself to that of the bride. Two essential conditions—one of material character and the other moral—are involved in this probationary union; in the first place, the groom must become the provider for, and the protector of, the entire family of the bride, including the dependent children and such cripples and invalids as may be tolerated by the tribe—i. e., he must display and exercise skill in turtle-fishing, strength in the chase, subtlety in warfare, and all other physical qualities of competent manhood. This relation, with the attendant obligations, holds for a year, i. e., a round of the seasons. During the same period the groom shares the jacal and sleeping robe provided for the prospective matron by her kinswomen, not as privileged spouse, but merely as a protecting companion; and throughout this probationary term he is compelled to maintain continence—i. e., he must display the most indubitable proofs of moral force. During this period the always dignified position occupied by the daughter of the family culminates; she is the observed of all observers, the subject of gossip among matrons and warriors alike, the recipient of frequent tokens from designing sisters with an eye to shares of her spouse's spoils, and the receiver of material supplies measuring the competence of the would-be husband; through his energy she is enabled to dispense largess with lavish hand, and thus to dignify her clan and honor her spouse in the most effective way known to primitive life; and at the same time she enjoys the immeasurable moral stimulus of realizing that she is the arbiter of the fate of a man who becomes warrior or outcast at her bidding, and through him of the future of two clans—i. e., she is raised to a responsibility in both personal and tribal affairs which, albeit temporary, is hardly lower than that of the warrior-chief. In tribal theory the moral test measures

585

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

time they agree, she shall go along with him as betrothed, but he is not to have any knowledge of her till the utmost payment is discharged; all which is punctually observed. Thus they lie together under one covering for several months, and the woman remains the same as she was when she first came to him.[1]

This record also is peculiarly pertinent, partly in that it practically corroborates the Seri testimony, but chiefly in that it indicates definite transition toward a higher culture-plane in which the primitive material test is at least partially replaced by a commutation in goods or their equivalents.

On reducing the marital customs of the Seri to conventional terms, the more prominent features are found to be (1) strict clan exogamy and (2) absolute tribal endogamy, together with (3) theoretical or constructive monogamy, coupled with (4) vague traces of polyandry, and (5) an apparently superficial polygyny, as well as (6) total absence of purchase or capture of either spouse.

On reviewing the customs in the light of their influence on the everyday life of the tribe, certain features stand out conspicuously: (1) Perhaps the most striking feature is the collective character of the function; for while the movement originates in personal inclination on the part of the suitor and is shaped by personal inclination on the part of the maiden, all manifestations of inclination are open and public (at least to the elders of the two clans involved), while the personal sentiments on both sides are completely subordinated to the public interests of clans and tribe as weighed and decided by the matronly lawgivers and adelphiarchal administratives. Thus neither man nor maid mates for themself, but both love and move in the tribal interests and along the lines laid down by the tribal leaders. (2) As a corollary or a complement (according to the viewpoint) to the collectivity of the mating, the next most striking feature is the formal or legal aspect of the union; for the entire affair, from inception to consummation, is rigorously regulated by precedents and usages handed down from an immemorial past. Thus the roots of young affection are not destroyed but rather cultivated, though the burgeoning vine and the outreaching tendrils are trained to a social structure shaped in ages gone and kept in the olden form by unbroken tradition. (3) A collateral feature of the customs is the necessary reaction of the requirements on individual character of both groom and bride; for the would-be warrior-spouse is compelled to display high qualities of physical and moral manhood on pain of ostracism and outlawry, so that his passions of ambition and affection are at once stimulated to the highest degree, while the maiden's pride of blood and possession and her sense of regnant responsibility are fostered to the utmost. The brief preliminary courtship and the long probationary mating mark an era of intensification in two lives at their most impressionable stage; and if there be

[1] The History of Carolina, etc, by John Lawson (1714), reprint of 1860, pp. 302-303. Attention was called to this passage by Mr James Mooney.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

584 585 aught in the simple yet puissant law of conjugal conation—that law whose motive underlies the world's song and story and all the pulsing progress of mankind as the inspiration of most men's work and most women's hopes—the vital intensity of this era passes down the line of blood-descent to the betterment of later generations. (4) Another collateral feature is the necessary reaction on clan and tribe; for not only [182] [166] does the individual character-making raise the average physique and morale of the group, but the carefully studied restraint of excessive individuality serves to strengthen still further the tribal bonds and to lift still higher the racial bar against aliens. The blackest crime in the Seri calendar is the toleration of alien blood; and no more effective device could be found for keeping alive the race-sense on which this canon depends than that virtually sacramental surveillance of sexual intimacy which Seri usage requires.[1]

000 On scanning the conventional classifications of human marriage in the light of the Seri customs, it becomes clear that these customs define a plane not hitherto recognized observationally. For convenience, this plane and the mode of marriage defining it may, in special allusion to the correlative race-sense, be styled *ethnogamy;* and the more systematic characters of this mode and plane of marriage may be outlined briefly:

1. The most conspicuous character of ethnogamic union, as manifested in the type tribe, is its absolute confinement to the consanguineal group. The breach of this limitation is hardly conceivable in the minds of the group, since aliens are not classed as human, nor even dignified as animals of the kinds deified in their lowly faith, but contemned as unclean and loathsome monsters; yet the infraction has a sort of theoretical place at the head of their calendar as an utterly intolerable crime. In respect to this character, ethnogamy corresponds fairly with the endogamy of McLennan, Spencer, and others, i. e., with the tribal endogamy of Powell.

2. A hardly less conspicuous character of ethnogamic union is the formality, or legality, accompanying and reflecting the collective nature of the function. In this respect ethnogamy is the direct antithesis of that hypothetical promiscuity postulated by Morgan and adopted by Spencer, Lubbock, Tylor, and others; and the customs of the type tribe go farther, perhaps, than any other example in verifying the alternative

[1] The remarkable race-sense of the tribe, with the conjugal conation in which it seems to rest, are discussed ante, pp. 149-161. There is nothing to indicate, and much to contradict, that the Seri are consciously engaged in stirpiculture; yet their social and tribal devices would seem to be no less effective in developing race-sense, with its concomitants, than were those of prehistoric men in developing the physical attributes of animal associates, such as the wool-bearing of the sheep, the egg-laying of the fowl, and the milk-giving of the cow; or the still more striking mental attributes, such as the servility of the horse, the fidelity of the dog, and the domesticity of the cat. All these attributes are artificial, though not consciously so in their producers, hardly even to modern users; they are by-products of long-continued breeding and coercion, commonly directed toward collateral ends (as when the horse was bred for speed, the dog for hunting, and the fowl and cat for beauty); and, similarly, the Seri race-sense would seem to be largely a by-product of faith-shaped customs designed primarily to propitiate or invoke supernal potencies—yet the collateral effect is not diminished because overlooked in the primary motive.

123 but nothing happened.

123 622 [116] We reached Hermosillo at three in the afternoon, and as we landed Roberto and Sara met us, and Roberto embraced me. Then the Seri Indian Chief rushed up and fairly hugged me in his joy at seeing me again. A timid wild-looking Seri boy, of fifteen years of age, shyly shook hands with the *Americano*, while all the Mexican men and women, fully one hundred in number, looked on open-mouthed and wide-eyed, to see the Chief of the wildest and lowest of savage Indians in North America, rush up and embrace a white man.

We all climbed into Roberto's auto-truck, and my things were brought to Hotel Cohen, and then we all went to Roberto's home and stayed all the afternoon. He had just returned from the coast the day before, and Juan Tomas was determined to come also and greet me, and the boy---a nephew---hung on to the Chief, and finally Roberto said he would have to return on foot if he brought him. Juan Tomas said that made no difference. He would walk to the coast eighty or ninety miles, if only he could come.

[291] [302] He was probably seventy-five years old. He wore a hat, but his hair was straggly and he had a slight moustache. He wore shirt and trousers and a dirty kilt---remanent of the Pelican-skin-kilt---around his waist, and he was barefooted. The boy had a not unpleasant face, long wild hair, shirt, pants, and a cotton kilt reached to his knees. He, too, was barefooted.

I gave the Chief a knife, and the boy a red crayon and fifty cents. With the crayon he made a V on his kilt. He was very shy and always kept in a shadow, or in the background, and he spoke no Spanish although he knew the Spanish alphabet.

Sara showed some photographs and postcards in a baloptican in a dark room, and among them were pictures of some Seris and myself. These created much excitement with the Chief and the boy, and they jabbered together in the Seri language with animation. They recognized some of the subjects, their own people.

584 622 648 123 Juan Tomas is to be married soon to an elderly Seri dame, and we have been invited to attend the fiesta. He has been laying in the trousseau for the bride, and several gallons of mescal. A steer or burro will have to be provided, and all the fixin's and nothing will be left undone to make a very festive occasion. When asked to show us his gifts he reluctantly brought forth a package which he carefully unwrapped and disclosed eighteen yards of *manta*, two red pieces and one pink piece of Calico, some red handkerchiefs, and one box for painting the face. He carefully wrapped these up again and put them in the room set apart for him and the boy.

[588] [589] The woman he is to marry has no male relatives from whom she can be bought, so the Chief appointed a man and created him Uncle *pro-tempore*, and to him the Chief is going to give a rifle and a blanket as the purchase price. Pretty high!